

BEAUTY,

THE PARENT OF HOPE.

A POEM,

DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL

OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY,

May 12th, 1862,

BY APPOINTMENT OF THE SENIOR CLASS,

BY

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Read the great law in Beauty's cheering reign,
Blent with all ends through matter's wide domain;
She breathes Hope's language and with boundless range,
Sublimes all forms, smiles through each subtle change,
And with insensate elements combined,
Ordains their constant ministry to mind!

[H. T. TUCKERMAN.]

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BEAUTY.

I.

BEAUTY is the breath of being—
Stamp of Immortality!—
Impress of the Soul, e'er seeing
Faith evince Reality!
Beauty paints the cosmic whole,
Which, reflected from the soul,
This dark life-scene, reimbues
With primal tints—immortal hues!
Hence those twinkling hopes that glimmer
Through her azure mantle, o'er us;
Shedding down a twilight shimmer
On the pathway far before us!

II.

Hopes of Youth! how brightly winging—
Fading—yet their force we feel!
For their shadows round us clinging,
Softly with our shadows steal!
'Mid the shifting scenes of life—
'Mid its turmoil, 'mid its strife—
Hopes of youth! can we forget them?
Joys of youth! can we regret them?
Beauty points her spirit finger,
To her spangled picture o'er us—
Still the beams of MORNING linger,
On the pathway far before us!

III.

Down within Life's winding valley,
 Mantled in a twilight gray,
 Scattered beams of gladness rally
 On the dusty pilgrim way!
 Each one bears a needed blessing—
 Promise of all good possessing—
 For it yields a hopeful ray,
 Caught from angels on the way!
 Such and only such the light,
 Ever greets our moral sight—
 The light from blessings we receive—
 The light that bids the heart believe!
 And as sunbeams oft' illume,
 Some dilapidated tomb—
 Thus Hope appears with argent ray,
 To steal one half our gloom away!
 Then we bear each burden lightly,
 Joining oft' in joyful chorus;
 And the morrow beams more brightly,
 On the pathway far before us!

IV.

'Tis the still starry hour when, hushed in repose,
 The lordly and lowly are lost to their woes—
 When Silence usurping omnipotent sway,
 Leads forward his legions in phantom array,
 O'er a beautiful world falling prostrate where'er
 His banner is seen or his heralds appear—
 'Tis that timorous hour when witches are said
 To rouse from their couches the skeleton dead;—
 And clutching their fingers so bony and dank,
 To dance to the tune of their skeleton clank!—
 'Tis that dear little hour, the briefest will play
 On the dial, recording the flight of To-day;
 When Time as he rides in remorseless career,

Gives his scythe and his glass to his old charioteer ;
 And with both hands upraised to the stars overhead,
 Stands list'ning their chant o'er the day nearly dead !
 —When Death the Pale Driver swift urges the car,
 As the stroke of Eternity knells from afar ;
 And a tear from the Night like a meteor speeds,
 As a dew-jewelled crown o'er the day and its deeds !
 —Now the last stroke is given—cease the echoes at last—
 And To-day is as Yesterday when it is past !—
 'Tis the lone midnight hour ! From his friends far away,
 But with sweet recollections of many a day
 Of childhood and boyhood, still with him to bless
 His sore saddened heart with a soothing caress—
 A student is sitting, half hid by the gloom
 Of flickering forms as they dance round his room ;
 In their weird silent revels unnoticed by him,
 Intensively viewing the embers now dim.

V.

There he sits in his old easy chair by the fire,
 Like the image of Fate, in his ominous ire ;
 An eager spectator of phantoms in fight,
 For the gory and hotly fought field—Anthracite !
 One by one as the shadows fall prone on the field,
 And anon leaping up as if scorning to yield—
 One by one as they fight and then fade in the dust,
 Then arise with new strength as if conquer they must—
 He reflects on the Past—on the legends of old—
 Sees Pandora's box and the " Apple of Gold"—
 And it may be recalls with incredulous smile,
 That bard of the rock-ribbed Ægean isle—
 That apostle of song, whose inspirited page
 Has gladdened all lands and illumed every age,
 Since, with magical art and Promethean fire,
 The gods came to earth at the sound of his lyre !
 And perhaps in his musing he fights on the plain

With Achilles or Hector, and hears thrice again
 The shout of the victors—the anthems of joy,
 From the hosts of the Greek or the armies of Troy;
 —Or stands with a heart beating proudly and free
 With Leonidas' band at the Gate by the Sea!—
 Or joins in the charge of the patriot brave,
 As the hosts of Mardonius march to the grave;—
 Hears Citharon's sweet mountain-harp echo the strain,
 From the hearts of the free on Bœotia's plain;
 While Æsopus leaps merrily on to the sea,
 From the field of Platea the pride of the free!

VI.

It may be in thought he flies far thro' the night,
 And gazes enraptured, in holy delight,
 On the Bethlehem star of his dear native land,
 As it beams on the brows of her brave-hearted band!—
 As it shines with a glow from the jubilant morn,
 O'er the spot where a Nation of Monarchs was born!
 Perhaps as he gazes, o'er hills from afar,
 Comes the booming of battle—the clangor of war—
 Now he strikes side by side with the noble and brave,
 For Freedom to triumph or sleep on her grave!—
 Now he hears the sweet songs that his forefathers sing,
 Which from Lexington, Bennington, Bunker Hill ring—
 Hears them sounding away over valley and glen,
 From Trenton, and Princeton, and Monmouth, and then
 Far away in the South, with the voice of the sea,
 Swells the chorus at Yorktown—"THE SONG OF THE FREE!"
 —Now the conflict has ceased—Freedom's birthright is won!
 But the breath of the battle hangs heavy and dun,
 And so deep is the blush of the slow rising sun
 That the stars in affright flee away one by one!
 But the Spirit of Union unharmed by the wars,
 Secures the sweet hopes in her mantle of bars!

VII.

Oh! who can portray the emotion which thrills

Through the heart of that student! the passion that fills
 His whole soul, as he peers thro' the night of the Past,
 On the birth of his dear native land, and the last,
 The dearest prized treasure to Liberty left,
 Of earlier offspring so rudely bereft!
 He beholds the dear forms of his forefathers there—
 Hears their low fervent accents of tremulous prayer—
 Hears the matin of Freedom released from all bands—
 Hears the mountains rejoice and the floods clap their hands—
 Hears the deep call to deep in the voice of the free—
 Hears the waterfalls laugh—hears the shout of the sea—
 Hears the prayer of thanksgiving, the peans of praise,
 Which patriot sires in their gratitude raise—
 And he feels that his loved native land may repose
 In glory, secure from the hand of her foes,
 Till the scroll of her future be rolled from on high,
 And her banner from battlements barring the sky!

VIII.

“Tho' the Present be dark as the midnight hour;
 Tho' Corruption, Oppression and Tyranny lower;
 Tho' the Eagle may dip his broad wing in a cloud;
 Tho' Freedom may walk in a gore-stiffened shroud—
 No tears of the Present o'er deeds of the Past—
 No fears o'er the Present the Future may cast—
 Nor aught shall disturb the full confident trust,
Of that people whose hope is the GOD OF THE JUST!”

IX.

“With what contradictions existence is rife!
 What a veil of enchantment is thrown over life!
 And the most that we know is the fact that we live—
 Or the cause or the purpose we hardly conceive;
 While the fate that impends o'er the end of our way,
 Is only upheld by the tremulous ray
 Of the silver-winged Hope, while the pathway extends

Far beyond the dark spot where our pilgrimage ends !
 O the *good* and the *evil*, the *serpent* and *dove*—
 As Hatred and Friendship, with Envy and Love—
 And the Passions commingled with cherubim hosts—
 And the fruits of the Spirit, with Stygian ghosts—
 And Murder with Mercy, and Joy with Despair—
 And Avarice clutching the Spirit of Prayer—
 Every Sin we would shun—every blessing receive—
 Every Error we fear—every Truth we believe—
 All throng in our pathway, and struggle in strife ;
 But to vanquish the WRONG is the ACME OF LIFE !”

X.

“Tho’ sad is the lot of humanity here—
 Tho’ the glass we look through is bedimmed with a tear—
 Tho’ the loveliest flowers breathe the richest perfume,
 In the wilderness wild, or over the tomb ;
 Tho’ the brightest of blessings we seldom may heed,
 And more sacred they seem as they farther recede ;
 Tho’ the night of our toil has more shadows than light,
 And fear fills the goblet of every delight ;
 E’en tho’ life is proclaimed by the tongue of Decay,
 And morning and evening are mantled in gray ;
 Though alike we may trace—ever pallid and cold—
 On the cheek of the young, on the brow of the old,
 In the eye of lone Grief, on the sweet lip of Joy,
 The dust-hue of Death ! Sin’s baser alloy
 Giving hope to the sorrow, despair to the mirth,
 And a tomb to the treasures and pleasures of earth !
 Or what tho’ the temple of God may upraise
 Its bright burnished spire to the Throne of all Praise ;
 And the chant as it rolls through the arches along,
 Is commingled anon with the Bacchanal song ;
 Or what tho’ the palace, magnificent—vast,
 O’er the hut of the humble its shadow may cast ;
 Or the beautiful bridal procession may tread,

In the steps of the mourners, who bury their dead ;
 Or the orange-wreath scatter with blossoms the bier ;
 Or both sorrow and joy be embraced in a tear ;
 Or the friends that we love and so fondly may trust,
 Prove untrue, or shall soon write their names in the dust ;
 While the friends that remain are the bitterest foes,
 Whose sympathy adds to our torturing woes ;
 What though the summation of life may be this :
 Unflinching misfortune—uncertain the bliss !
 While the joys we receive, and the light that we have,
 Come charnel-tinged thro' the dark halls of the grave—
 Oh ! we know that the morn of a happier day,
 Shall roll all these clouds and these shadows away !
 Then—gazing no longer with tear-bedewed eyes,
 Our souls shall be wrapped in the robe of the skies !
 And the battles of life will have made us more strong,
 To join in the joys of yon jubilant throng !”
 Thus musing he sits in his chair by the fire,
 Still viewing the embers in struggles expire ;
 Still viewing the contests of humanized Ghouls,
 Reproducing the struggles of life o'er the coals !

XI.

And now come the Phantoms—the large and the small—
 Those fanciful Phantoms from ceiling and wall ;
 Where in many a revel of weird-like delight,
 In many an orgie and mystical rite—
 They rehearsed the wild ogreish scenes of their home,
 By the Stygian lake in the land of the Gnome !
 They come in a charge that we moderns love well,
 Regardless of tactics and *a-la-pell-mell* !
 The student is taken ! and now you may see
 The Chiefs, in a council of war on his knee !
 There scouts are deploying to learn if they may,
 Whether any “*masked batteries*” stand in the way !
 Some are holding their course o'er the back of his chair,

And some reconnoiter his dense bushy hair—
 While others are seeking a moment's repose,
 'Mid the forest enf'lading the bridge of his nose!
 But just at this moment a rust'ling they hear;
 Those elfin-like pickets who perch on each ear;
 Ah! Somnus, the god with the dull leaden eye,
 And his poppy-winged legions compels them to fly!
 Hence scattering wide in precipitate flight,
 They seek their Eidolon, the ebony Night!
 Yet meantime the Somnific King gives command,
 That the student be borne to the realms of Dream-Land;
 That magical isle in a bottomless sea,
 Where Reason is captive, and Fancy is free!
 Then in a cymar of bright purple and blue,
 So slight that a gossamer web would shine through;
 They bear him away, those poppy-winged sprites,
 To a car that is formed of pure opaline lights!
 Then on with the speed of a sweet happy thought,
 The far distant end of their journey is sought!

XII.

But futile the hope to imagine their pace,
 Thro' the regions untraversed of stellar space;
 As they fly o'er the countries of fairy *galore*,
 Where the mountains forever stand toppling, o'er
 The dead briny billows of luminous lakes,
 Whose determinate shore is a cordon of snakes!
 As they fly o'er the tarns and the black sedgy pools,
 In the land of the Ouphs where King Oberon rules;
 As they plunge thro' the stream of cymophanous light,
 Which flows thro' the star-begemmed valley of Night!
 But away—far away in full order arrayed,
 Sweeps the Dream-God, the car, and the Fay cavalcade;
 And away—swift away! unimagined their speed!
 For a wild shooting star is their fire-breathing steed!
 And in vain do the swift wingéd moments pursue;

Far behind in the distance they vanish from view!
 All unheeded the Space—all unnoted the Time;
 Their journey is ended as soon as begun;
 And the student beholds a vast temple sublime,
 But his fairy retainers are faded and gone!

XIII.

He stands alone, and just before
 A brightly burnished golden door;
 The threshold is of pearly dew,
 Reflecting rays of mingled hue!
 On either side, like molten glass,
 Rise massy walls of chrysoprase;
 While here and there a tower is seen,
 Of emerald or of olivine!
 Around the azure portal, swing
 Unnumbered silver lamps, which fling
 A flood of "chrystalline delight,"
 Upon the frieze of sarcolite;
 And gleams the sardel architrave,
 Like setting sun upon the wave;
 While lightly rises, tow'ring high,
 The spire of lucent lazuli!
 All these, with varied gems and pure,
 Were studded o'er—designed to please,
 And yet the richest garniture,
 Were simple flowers and waving trees!
 O'erawed—bewildered—in amaze,
 Amid that full resplendent blaze;
 With eye intent, yet free from pain—
 He gazes long, cannot refrain,
 From gazing on the lovely sight!
 Absorbed in wonder and delight,
 He heeds not that he stands before
 Sweet Beauty's golden temple door!

XIV.

He stands entranced! nor could he tell,
 How long his raptured vision fell,
 On glistening wall and dome of fire,
 On turret and on sparkling spire;—
 When sweetest strains in symphony,
 Like music o'er the summer sea—
 Or like the harp that breezes play,
 Through balmy bowers at close of day,
 Falls on his ear! enwraps his soul,
 In ecstasy beyond control!
 Meanwhile a long and radiant train,
 Of white-stoled priests approach amain,
 Each bearing in his dexter hand,
 A censer from the golden sand;
 The richest incense floats the while,
 From Araby and Indian isle;
 And fragrant is the ambient air,
 As of bright spirits fraught with prayer!
 Meantime a bright cherubic throng,
 From niche and arch take up the song;
 And strew unfading garlands o'er
 The pathway to the Temple door,
 What time the sacerdotal host,
 Approached the pearly portal post!
 And then—as if a sentient thing—
 And still as stroke of angel's wing,
 And silent as the falling dew,
 Or motion of a tiny fin;
 The golden gate wide open flew,
 And passed the white-robed train within!

XV.

A splendor all unseen before,
 Shines forth through that wide open door!
 Nor can he—would he dare repel,

The magic of that mighty spell
 Which urges onward, 'till he stands
 Upon the crystal golden sands—
 Which still impels a furtive tread,
 Upon the em'rald tinted floor;
 With jewels richly carpeted—
 As now he stands within the door!
 Such glory as the wingéd Hours,
 Might once have known in Eden's bowers;
 Untarnished by the breath of Time,
 Alike supernal and sublime;
 Such as the Maker saw "*was good*,"
 Pervades the mighty amplitude!
 The sapphire dome high arches o'er,
 Bestudded thick with golden ore;
 While full amid the glowing sheen,
 These living characters are seen:
 "LET EVERY ONE WHO ENTERS HERE,
 BEHOLD IN MEEKNESS AND REVERE!
 JEHOVAH'S WORK IS NOT IN VAIN—
 THIS BEAUTY'S TEMPLE! GOD'S OWN FANE!"

XVI.

Far more than reach of mortal powers,
 Far more than space of human hours—
 Not even angel's tongue, might sound
 The fullness, and the depth profound,
 Of glories, nought could dim or fade,
 Since Earth's foundation stone was laid;
 And which shall still invite the view,
 In this broad temple as when new,
 While Earth revolves at God's command,
 Within the hollow of His hand!
 For here, unnumbered brilliants swing,
 Revolving round the dome, and fling
 Prevailing lustre far and near,

And each a sun of boundless sphere!
 And pluméd forms of every brood,
 Or song, or sweet similitude ;—
 Breathe softest cadence—fairy staves,
 In unison with wind and waves!
 Or pierce with flashing wing the mist,
 Of mottled pearl and amethyst!
 Or dip beneath the amber sea ;
 Or perch upon some Titan tree,
 Whose sylvan treasures intermix,
 The em'rald and the sardonyx!
 Yes! here are all things small and great,
 The living and inanimate ;
 And each reflected varied hue
 Is type of what we often view
 Within the cosmos of the soul,
 As Vice or Virtue gains control!

XVII.

Without a care to intervene
 Through all that wide extended scene,
 Long time the student's raptured gaze,
 Seeks here and there amid the blaze,
 The works of Beauty Absolute ;
 Meanwhile he stands in wonder mute!
 And now approaching from her station,
 Pure and holy Contemplation,
 Beauty's handmaid robed in smiles—
 Comes to guide him through the aisles!
 Guide him to the crystal shore,
 Where the jasper billows roar ;
 Guide him to the blooming bowers,
 Musical with breath of flowers ;
 Guide him through the waving shade,
 Of the gneissic colonnade ;
 Comes to guide him to the shrine,

Where the vestal Virtues twine
 Wreaths of blessings ever new,
 Rich in every hopeful hue !
 There is *Temperance* ! handing o'er
 What is needed—nothing more ;
 While her mantle-hues adorn
 Healthful eve and blushing morn !
Patience, Modesty, and Truth,
 Those *graces* of immortal Youth,
 Attend upon the step of Age,
 And Nature's wide instructive page ;
Benevolence renews the sight,
 With e'er increasing dear delight ;
 For with a free judicious hand,
 The whole material universe,
 Obedient to her kind command,
 Receives all good without a curse !
 And last—behold the chiefest one !
 Arrayed in glory like the sun !
 Whose footsteps mark the hours of day,
 Or trip the lea when moonbeams play ;
 Whose dewy robe of sparkling sheen,
 She wraps around a world of Sin ;
 Who weeps in many a show'ring tide,
 O'er fields of blood or peaks of Pride—
 As if her tears could melt the snow,
 Or cleanse the stains of guilt and woe ;—
 Sweet *Charity*—than all more dear !
 The soul of sympathy sincere !
 Whose sunny beam will never cease,
 To light the stars of Hope and Peace !
 And there in holy attitude,
 Like emblems of Beatitude
 They stand, before the temple shrine,
 Fair Beauty's vestal train divine ;

While every blessing Beauty gives,
From each a living tint receives!

XVIII.

Meantime he sees that band once more,
Which erewhile ope'd the golden door,
Transfer these gifts from Beauty's hand,
To sinning men of every land!
Sweet Contemplation knowing well,
He knew not who these forms might be;—
“Yonder stars are where they dwell,
And they are Angel Hopes,” said she,
“Ever coming—ever going—
On the tide of mercies flowing!
Marvel not at words of mine;
Mortal may not gaze within
Beauty's bright immortal shrine;—
'Tis the human soul divine,
Though defiled by fearful sin!
Its inherent loveliness
Or with Guilt its ceaseless strife—
She portrays with truthfulness
In the outward acts of life!
All the blessings men receive,
E'en the sorrows that obtrude,
Bear a beam of Hope, to give
Promise of a future good!
Thus amid the hues that blend
On fair Nature's open face—
We may recognize a Friend,
Pointing to a Resting Place,
Where our Pilgrim toil shall cease,
And Beauty Relative be merged in the Absolute of Peace!”

XIX.

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Gone is the vision! conscious Joy from smiles cannot refrain,
For that glorious Living Temple and its teachings still remain!

XX.

Brothers! the beams of the setting sun,
Are dancing upon the dial!
The last of our College days—is gone!
To-morrow is one of trial!
But the gems we have gathered, as hand in hand
We have delved in the coral caves of the sea;
Or the garlands of flowers from every land,
We have twined for the brow of Philosophy;
And the beauties of Nature with Science and Art,
And the beauty of *action*, in *soul* and in *heart*,
And the beautiful hopes that have led us on—
Oh these are ours!
Immortal powers—
The *starlight* to guide in our pathway beyond!

XXI.

Onward amid the mingled rays,
Of beaming Hope and Beauty—
Let us not mourn the by-gone days,
As we tread the path of Duty!
Their labors were many and long, 'tis true,
But their pleasure we cannot forget!
For as pure and as lovely as morning dew,
Their memory brings no regret!
Such pleasure will Beauty forever impart—
Tho' earthly, yet sacred and dear to the heart,
As the type of those pleasures more noble—more fond;
Whose dawning appears,

In this Valley of Tears,
As the *starlight* that gleams in our pathway beyond!

XXII.

Beauty from yonder crystal gates,
Descends on aureate wings;
And a sinful world in silence waits,
The gladness her presence brings!
In the footsteps of every Curse, we see
The glow of her starry sheen!
The storm-cloud is fringed with her tracery—
The valleys are mantled in green,
And her morning kiss she will often reflect,
From many a thorn or a thistle's neck;
And she smiles on Death and his dismal bond,
As with cheerful ray,
From the tomb away,
She illumines forever our pathway beyond!
Beauty bedecks the falling tear,
With the rainbow tints of Youth!
'Tis Beauty that robes each rising Year,
In garments of Virtue and Truth!
There's beauty in Matter—there's beauty in Mind,
There's beauty in Sorrow and Mirth!
When the beauties of Nature and Soul are combined,
There's an *image* of Heaven on Earth!
The *good* and the *true*, every hope may impart,
With the spirit of Beauty enshrined in the heart!
Then Brothers—take courage! *O never despond!*
For the good we receive,
Should bid us believe,
That our *Father* smiles over the pathway beyond!

XXIII.

Let us study the beauty that ever attends
The purest of earthly delight;

For our hope and our happiness here depends,
 On viewing God's mercy aright!
 Our praise—every object in Nature demands,
 In the highs or the depths profound;
 Our love—the loveliest work of His hands,
 And the last—over all to be crowned;—
 Or in joy or in sorrow wherever we roam,
 Those emblems of angels—the light of our home—
 Those Eves of our Eden! who always respond,
 And Affection obey!
If they smile by the way,
 We shall *certainly hope* in our pathway beyond!

XXIV.

Then let us go forth in a beautiful world,
 Strong in the hopes of our youth!
 Undaunted—our banner to Heaven unfurled,
 To triumph in contests for truth!
 Or the Sword or the Pen we are destined to wield,
 Or with Love—or in carnage to die;—
 If our sword be the Spirit, and Faith be our shield,
 We shall meet in the mansions on high!
 In the beauty of love and of holiness,
 Let us look to our Father, that He may bless
 Our dear Alma Mater—than others more fond;
 And watch, while we pray
 For the coming of Day,
 Foretold by the stars in our pathway Beyond!

XXV.

Brothers! by many a labor dear!
 United in bonds of love!
 As we stand upon the threshold *here*,
 Let us look to our *home* above!
 Let us gaze on those beauties no tongue may tell—
 On the Golden streets and the Jasper sea!

And then will our parting word—"Farewell,"

Through life be a *beauteous harmony* !

The hour is at hand ! but brighter the ray

Of a Heavenly Hope, is illumining our way

To a lasting Re-union—to Love's living bond !

Then Brothers—*Farewell* !

God speed you ! FAREWELL !

Till we meet—at the END of our pathway—BEYOND !